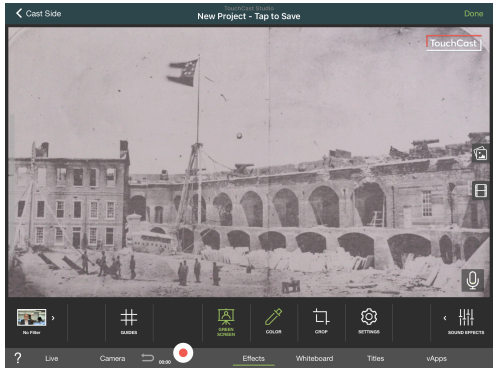
Go Green: Better Yet, Go Green Screen!

Michael DuBose

Why Go Green?

The use of Green Screen Technology in *all* classrooms is a simple way of transforming the learning environment into an incubator for both creative thinking and a much needed alternative methods of assessment. Not for students only, but as Education Technology Specialist Hanna Shekhter of Brauser Maimonides Academy in Fort Lauderdale, FL puts it, this fun technology gives teachers a way to “transport students to another location or time.”

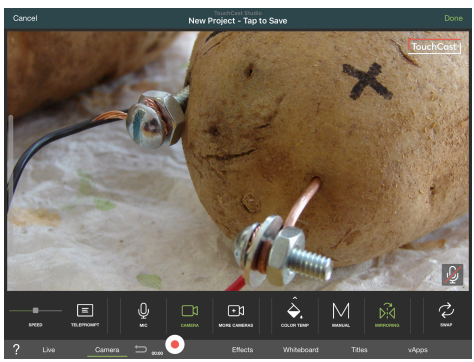


Our current video-driven generation of students would be right at home placing themselves on-screen at a famous Civil War battlefield, describing the event instead of droning out memorized facts about history.

(These images have

been placed on the green screen background using *TouchCast Studio.* The student could then annotate the image, provide narration about the event, or use it for a live or recorded discussion.)

What about this... the STEM project that, due to a school's limited resources, may not have the hands-on items needed for demonstration purposes? Move over Bill Nye...



green screens to the rescue!

Whatever the classroom project may be, with the use of one of my favorite iPad apps, *TouchCast Studio*, students can *Go Green.* Using this app, students record their science project "live" from Thomas Edison's lab; screen capture their solution to an Algebra problem, with audio explanation; or demonstrate their understanding of "Curl Down and Up" or "Leg Swings" for their Modern Dance class, while "on stage" at The Metropolitan Opera Lincoln Center. Any projects such

as these can easily be used as an alternative assessment, allowing students to have fun while completing them.

My Experiment

My passion for teaching outside the box exploded once again as I watched the success of a recent experiment that I conducted with seventh and eighth grade middle school classrooms. In my Creative Arts Technology classroom, I set up six green screen stations, some mobile stations that students could use in the hallway. I taught students how to use the *TouchCast Studio* app on their iPads and iPhones. They then became "ambassadors" to their other classrooms, charged with helping their teachers with the use of the app, and assisting their classmates as well (I conducted a Professional Development session for the entire staff before this experiment).

All one needed to do was observe the gleam in these new student leaders' eyes when they returned to my classroom throughout the school year, saying things such as, "Can we borrow two green screens," or, "My

teacher needs help with our project. You don't have to come; I've got this." These ambassadors helped to change the climate of the entire school and caused many apprehensive teachers to get on board.

Ready, Set, Go Green!

Before you throw out the "how much does this cost" question, think about this—I started with green screens from my Creative Arts Coordinator and eventually discovered other educators who were using all types of green material: construction paper, tablecloths, flat bed sheets, green fabric, and even found others who actually painted a wall green! With the use of science fair display boards covered in green, each student can have their own green screen recording booth! So, high budget, low budget, or no budget - let your creative mind go to work.

Tips for a Smooth Start

- If your school does not use iPads, digital cameras will work just as well.
- Check with your Tech Support Team for help getting set up correctly.

- Test everything yourself *before* introducing this to students. Where will you place your green screen? Are all devices working properly? Is the app/software downloaded onto all devices?
- Although I use *TouchCast Studio* extensively, there are other software and app options available that you will discover as you dig deeper.

The remainder of this chapter will focus on my use of the *TouchCast Studio* app in conjunction with my classroom setup. Ready? Let's go!

Before, During, and After

BEFORE the school year gets too far along, here are a few ideas to get students in front of a green screen and help them get to know each other:

1. ***Introducing...Me!***

   Classrooms are filled with students from right around the corner, as well as from around the world. Have students save images to their devices showing where they were born. Use maps and actual places. Do they know the city,

state, country, or the hospital? Use those images to record or present a live version of “All About Me.”

2. ***When I Go To College…***

   To promote College and Career Readiness, tell students that they have been given a 4-year college scholarship, but they must narrow their selection down to their top two colleges. While students research, have them save images and videos of college campuses and campus life. Have students select their top two and then use those images/videos, placing themselves as the “new kid on campus.”

3. ***Here I Am, A Professional…***

   The next great soccer player, NASA’s leading female scientist, an IT specialist–the sky’s the limit! Let students find images of someone currently working in their dream career. Have students use the green screen to transport themselves and stand next to their “career idol.” This activity can stand alone or can be used as

part of a unit on careers.

4. **My Progress Report...**

   I suggest having students create an electronic portfolio, using readily accessible software such as Google Drive. If you use Google Classroom, the organizing of projects is a cinch, and sharing with teachers and peers becomes seamlessly integrated. All projects can be revisited later in the school year, or lead to extension ideas.

Remember, the **BEFORE** objective is to get students comfortable using green screen technology. It also allows teachers to identify quick learners and develop group leaders for future collaborative projects.

DURING the school year, look for ways to transform assignments into green screen presentations. Students' ideas will flourish as they continue having fun using green screens. Here are some seed starters to help you get going:

- Show students examples of news broadcasts or business shows where hosts are using maps, charts, or graphs projected onto a green screen.

- On the *TouchCast Studio* app*,* allow students to explore the Annotate (Maps, Images, Videos, Web Pages or Files) templates. These are valuable tools for *all* classrooms.
- Couple this technology with apps such as *Nearpod* that allow student work to be projected to the class from their seats.
- After allowing students to explore the *TouchCast Studio* News Studio and Talk Show templates, have students work as partners or in small groups and record a "show" discussing a **Reading English Language Arts** assignment, or present "breaking news" about a **Social Studies** concept.
- Students can be interviewed while explaining their **Science** project with an appropriate image or live video background of them at work in the lab.
- **Creative Arts** students can record themselves completing a charcoal drawing assignment and then use the video for their green screen background as they discuss the steps it takes to complete their drawing, thus demonstrating an understanding of the concept taught.

- Let's get physical! Place **PE** students, learning the art of dribbling a basketball, onto the court of their favorite team. Working with a partner, students can record each other as they learn the skill, and turn in their finished project for a grade.
- **ESOL,** anyone? Learning new words becomes fun in front of a green screen with a background of the student's country, and images representing words in their new language.
- Here's my **BIG ONE**!!! The STRETCH! What if getting students comfortable talking in front of a green screen translated into greater success with those dreaded Brief Constructed Response questions on state assessments? In my professional opinion, I believe this technology can make a difference!

I could go on and on, but this is where your creativity takes the baton!

Remember that the **DURING** objective is to get students and teachers continuously thinking of ways to transform lessons into audio and video enriched

experiences.

Will this fit every lesson? No. Will every student get in front of the green screen? No. Will every student be engaged? YES! Many students have turned into classroom directors, camera operators, stage managers, and more. Remember, not all great Hollywood directors are former actors or actresses. We are helping them build skill and clear understanding of the 4 Cs: Communication, Collaboration, Creativity, and Critical Thinking.

AFTER students have become confident users of green screen technology, I offer a few suggestions:

1. Identify advanced users and assign them the task of training new students who transfer in during the school year.
2. Meet with the class and present a lesson or unit objective. Ask them to brainstorm ideas of how to accomplish the objective(s) using the green screen setup. This should increase student engagement and generate higher levels of enthusiasm among students.
3. Require partners or teams to:

a. plan their projects first
b. share with you (The Executive Producer) their idea
c. Obtain your approval before starting

Excited students using green screens can easily turn into groups sitting around chatting and exhibiting off-task behaviors. Accountability before projects begin can help maintain focus.

Try a “Previewing Session” where students show previews of their projects to the entire class, describing their progress to date. This can force accountability and add a little friendly competition.

YOUR MISSION, should you decide to accept it is to make it possible. To do so:

1. Start small
2. Have fun.
3. Let the students do the driving!

Working with Green Screen Technology is something that I thoroughly enjoy, and watching student creativity

grow and develop is what it's all about!

About the Author

Michael DuBose is a Music Technology Educator, Composer, and Workshop. His musical journey started as a kid growing up in Motown. From Cass Technical High School in Detroit, to Tennessee State University, then on to Illinois State University and Northwestern University's School of Music; the quest produced a Bachelor of Music, a Bachelor's in Music Education, and a Master's degree, specializing in Music Technology, Arts Integration, and Composition. Workshops, lectures, and performances have been shared with audiences in the U.S., London, and Japan, celebrating the joys of learning music with children and adults. He is currently serving as a Creative Arts Technology Specialist in the state of Maryland where he resides with his wife Demetria and their three children.

Reach out with your questions and workshop requests.

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